

What Happens When You Don't Listen to Your Wife?

Okay, men. You get home from work, walk in the door, and your wife starts talking about her day. Frustrations with her boss at work, her lunch with a friend, and challenges with a child are the first things she shares.

Somewhere in the midst of her words, you slowly tune out, look down at your phone, and let your mind wander to other things. You might think she doesn't notice, but she does. By not keeping eye contact and engaging with her, she senses that you don't care and that you think something else is more important.

Being a good listener is something I've struggled with for a long time. I'm a bottom-line kind of guy, so the fewer the words to make a point, the better. But over our 25 years of marriage, Susan has taught me how to be a better listener, although she would tell you I've got a long way to go.

So, whether your wife is sharing her deepest secrets or simply venting to you about her day, not listening to your wife when she talks can have several consequences, some of which I've experienced at times. Here are four of them:

1. Wives become distant. Sharing her thoughts and feelings is a moment of vulnerability for a woman. So when her husband doesn't give his full attention, she is left feeling rejected and instinctively pulls back to avoid more rejection. Rather than letting your wife draw herself back like this, I encourage you to keep her close at all costs.

Be observant enough to notice when she starts to recoil so that you can pull her into your arms, look her in the eyes, and let her know that you are always there to listen to her. This is something I need to work on.

2. Wives become indifferent. Another way wives handle a lack of attention from their husbands is by becoming indifferent. When your wife consistently feels like she isn't being heard, she will stop expecting anything at all from you. This is a very dangerous direction to be headed in with your spouse because of the way indifference quickly turns into emotional detachment. Rather than give your spouse reason to be indifferent, give her reason to be caring in your relationship.

3. Wives lose their desire. Once your wife becomes indifferent, a loss of desire is soon to follow. Lowering her expectations regarding her conversations with you leads to lowering her expectations regarding other aspects of your relationship. Unfortunately, this can cause a lack of physical desire in your relationship too. To regain that passion in your relationship, try using these "10 Things Wives Want to Hear From Their Husbands" and "10 More Things Wives Want to Hear From Their Husbands."

4. Wives move their focus to other relationships. The final way wives react when their husbands don't listen is by shifting their focus onto other relationships in their lives. When they aren't receiving affirmation from you, they will turn to others to fill that need.

This may mean they share more of what's going on in their life with girlfriends instead of you. This may mean your wife spends all her time in the evening talking to the kids instead of talking with you. Or this may mean she looks for reasons to stay late at work, spending time with co-workers who listen instead of trying to come home early to see you.

If you'd like to become a more effective listener, check out my blog post "Family Leadership: The Gift of Listening."

Have you experienced any of these consequences in your relationship? What are some ways you can make your spouse feel

listened to? Please leave your ideas in a comment below.

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